

Top Tips for Networking



Take the
plunge and gain
some **networking**
experience!

Introduction

Networking is an important part of business life. It's how we promote ourselves and our business and also how we meet new contacts who could be potential business contacts, referrers, clients, suppliers etc.

Networking is daunting for many but with a few pointers, by taking the plunge and gaining some networking experience, you will find that it can be fun and often friendships can be forged as well as some extremely useful business connections created.

We hope that some of the information within this guide will help you to build some skills and prepare you for confidently attending networking events with the view to getting the most out of them.

Events

Try and find events where you will expect to find the type of people that you want to meet. Use social media and follow networking groups to look for the next event and topics of debate.

Sometimes it is better to go to an event with someone else, maybe a contact who has been before that would be able to introduce you to others. The point of going though is to meet NEW people so make sure you don't spend the whole time you are at the event attached to your chaperone.

Try attending a variety of different events to see which ones work best for you. The number of events is vast and consists of breakfast meetings, lunch clubs, evening seminars and sporting events. Join the mailing list to ensure that you find out about future events which may be of interest to you.

Getting involved

Networking is all about making new contacts and whilst doing so, enhancing your profile so when you are going along to an event, make sure that this is in mind. You need to be proactive and go and start talking to people. Whilst intruding on an established conversation can be quite daunting, you should be able to gauge from the body language and shape of the group whether they are having an open discussion or something a little more private that you should steer away from. People will stand in an "open" stance if they are happy for others to join them, or more "closed" if they are deep in conversation if they don't want to be disturbed.

When you have found the group that you wish to join simply approach the group and say "do you mind if a join you?" This is when the introductions can take place and you can get involved in the conversation.



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Do's & Don'ts

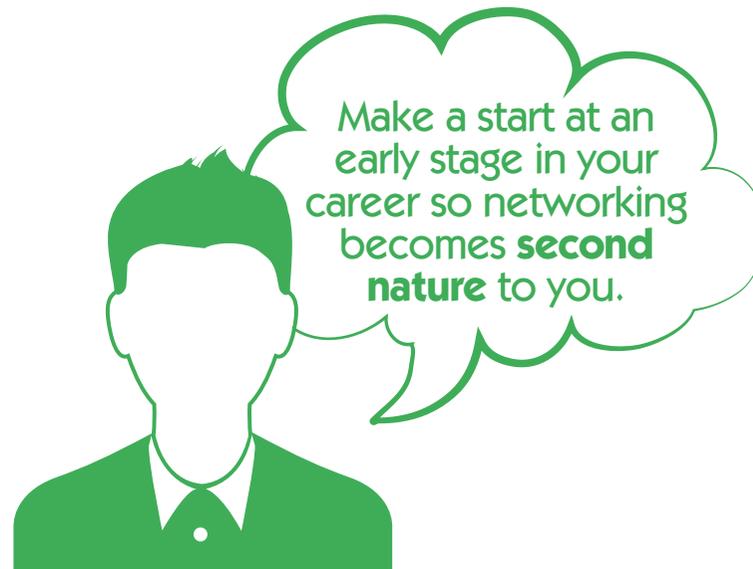
It's important to get the balance right between getting to know others and them learning a little about you.

- ✓ Do – try to establish a common ground with the person you are talking to via friendly conversation, rather than making it all about what you are going to get out of the conversation from the first introduction.
- ✗ Don't – try to get something out of the first meeting. Being able to interact with someone is the first hurdle to overcome so focus on this at first. If you think that there is something that you may be able to do together in the future why not exchange contact details and then try and arrange to meet up at a later date to talk more about how you may be able to help each other on a more professional basis.
- ✗ Don't – talk about yourself too much - people want to know a bit about you but you also need to find out about them so try and ask some open questions which will encourage your new contact to open up a little. From this point, you can find out about them and whether you have things in common which will naturally take the conversation in a new direction.

- ✓ Do – focus on one or two key people rather than trying to work the whole room – this way you can form stronger relationships with people far quicker.
- ✓ Do - try to mirror the body position of the person you are talking to – this shows empathy with them and that you are listening to what they have to say. Be careful however not to go overboard as you don't wish to invade their personal space.

The follow up

If you have gone to the trouble of attending an event and meeting with people then you need to ensure that follow this up afterwards. Try and connect with them via social media – Twitter, LinkedIn. Send them an email to firm up the connection saying it was good to meet. If you do feel that you can do any business together, then this would be a good time to suggest a further meeting, such as meeting for coffee to discuss how you may be able to work together going forwards.



Make a start at an early stage in your career so networking becomes **second nature** to you.

Conclusion

Networking in the professional services community is becoming more and more part of what is expected by employers of their mid-senior level personnel. So why not make a start at an early stage in your career so this becomes second nature to you and something that isn't daunting at all? It can be fun and a way of meeting new business contacts who may potentially refer work to you in the future.

Don't expect that you will attend one networking event and come away with a lot of new business. Winning business through networking is a long-term strategy and requires a consistent approach and time and effort on your part. Once people get to know you then you are more likely to work with them more successfully in the future.

And finally....

...of course, if there is anything you wish to discuss in more detail, the Blusource consultants are here to help!

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